

A
SERMON
Preached at the
ASSIZES
HELD AT
HORSHAM
IN THE
County of Sussex,

August 23d. 1691.

Before the Honourable
Sir WILLIAM DOLBEN, Knight,
one of the JUSTICES of the Court
of KINGS BENCH.

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A C T S XXIV. xvi.

*And herein do I exercise my self to have
always a Conscience void of offence to-
wards God, and towards Man.*

D I D I design to entertain you with the
Character of *St. Paul*, I am sensible I
could not begin it more advantageously than with
that of *Felix Tertullus*, and the *Jews* his Prosecu-
tors; the *Abilities* and *Corruption* of the one, the
Eloquence and *Mercenarineß* of the other, the
Bigottry, *Malice*, and ill *Arts* of the last, serving
most fitly as foiles or shades to set off and adorn
his *Vertue* and *Integrity*; but purposing to consider
these words, not so much as the Character of *St.
Paul*, as the Rule and Standard of Christian Life
in general, and consequently not to survey the
History of his Life, which in all the several in-
stances and parts of it would apparently justify
and make good this short Account he has given
us of it, but to assist you to regulate and con-
duct your own. I will advance directly to the

body of the Text, without stopping you by any Remarks or Reflections on any thing in the Context.

The words are part of the Apology which St. Paul made for his Religion and himself before the Tribunal of *Felix*. In the 14 and 15 Verses he wipes off the Aspersions of Novelty and Schism cast by *Tertullus* on his Religion, asserting that it was no other than what was taught by the Law and the Prophets; in this he frees himself from the Calumny of Turbulency and Sedition, avowing boldly the Innocence and Integrity of his Life, *herein do I exercise my self, &c.* Where we have,

First, The great Business and End of St. Paul's Religion, *to have a Conscience void of offence towards God, and towards Man.*

Secondly, His Diligence and Industry in the pursuit of it; *herein do I exercise my self.*

Thirdly, The close connexion of this Verse with the former by way of inference and deduction, shews us the ground and motive of all this; namely, the belief of a Resurrection, *ver. 15. And have hope towards God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a Resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.*

Supposing now that the Example of St. Paul passes, as indeed it does, an Obligation upon all Christians to imitate it; for *it behoves us to be followers of him, as he was of Christ*, 1 Cor.

11. 1.

Accommodating all this to our selves, I will begin with the Duty in my Text, and shew you,

First, In general, what it is to have a Conscience void of Offence, and then more particularly, what it is as it relates, first, to God, and next, to Man.

To have a Conscience void of Offence, speaking in general terms, is to have a Conscience neither abused by false Principles, nor overpower'd by inordinate Affections; a Conscience that neither misleads nor disturbs and tortures us; a Conscience that neither renders us secure and confident in the wrong, nor ubraids us with any Hypocritical prevarication or wilful violation of the right. To such a Conscience you will easily resolve two things necessary, *Illumination* and *Obedience*. *Illumination* makes a right Conscience, *Obedience* a good one; both together a Conscience void of offence. I say, both together; for first, as to the necessity of Obedience, in vain are the Dictates and Commands of

of Conscience, be it never so well informed or enlightned, if Avarice and Ambition, Lust or Revenge, or any other irregular Appetite cannot pleasure, baffle, and insult them.

Nor is the necessity of *Illumination* less evident; Religion and Property are no more secure from the Invasions of a *seduced* than a *fear'd* Conscience; false Principles may betray Men into all the Crimes, and give birth to all the Mischiefs which Lusts and Passions do; Men may be led by an abus'd Conscience to rend and divide the Church, to subvert and betray our Laws and Liberties, and to expose our Religion and our Country; *i. e.* in one word, all that is dear to us, to the Insolence and Cruelty of a Foreign Enemy and a Popish Persecution; this an abus'd Conscience may do, what can Luxury and Irreligion, the Lust of Money, the Lust of Power do worse? This I have said to convince such as would have a *Conscience void of offence*, of the indispensable Obligation they lie under, not only to act and live up to the Dictates of Conscience, but also to endeavour with all Meekness, Sincerity, and Impartiality to inform it aright; without the one you will fall under the many stripes of the Servant in the Gospel, *who knew his Master's will and did it*
not,

not, Luke 12. 47. Without the other, under the Woe pronounced by the Prophet against such as call *good evil, and evil good*, *Isai. 5. 20.*

I easily foresee this general Account of the Duty in my Text will be encountred with two Objections: First, How shall we find out Truth and Right, when the Cunning and the Learned have raised such a Mist about it, when the Lusts and Interest of Men have perplexed and entangled it with so many endless subtilties and distinctions? Where shall we find a certain Rule, when Divinity and Law, how constant and inflexible soever they may be in themselves, are accommodated to every Design, forc'd to yield Patronage and Countenance to every Cause; and in a word, seem to speak no Language but such as Power and Interest inspire? Without examining the Justice of this Objection, whether it be a Calumny or a Truth, the Product of Spite, Atheism, and Prophaneness, or of an humble Conscience of Humane Infirmary, and the real difficulty of finding out Truth and Right in some Cases. I Answer, Be it so, yet have we a Clew that will easily wind us out of this Labyrinth, and that is *Sincerity*, by which I mean an honest and humble Endeavour to
know

know our Duty, and a steady Resolution to perform it; this will either prevent our Error, or else prevent the mischief and malignity of it; the upright Man shall never want light to guide him into Truth and Right, or Goodness and Charity to extinguish like a Sovereign Antidote the Venom and Poyson of false Principles and Error, for that of Solomon, *He that walks uprightly, walks safely*, Prov. 10. 9. and the Gospel promises of Spiritual Assistance and Illumination, can import no less. And thus I am got clear of the first Difficulty.

A Second Objection I am to expect is this, But alas, when we know our Duty, how hard a Task is it to do it? If nothing less than acting and living up to the Dictates of Conscience, can gain us a Conscience void of Offence, alas, who then can have it! Is it not *Pelagianism*, *Po-pery*, or something worse to assert the possibility of keeping the Commandments of God? Is it so? What means then that place of our Saviour, *If a man love me he will keep my Commandments*, John 14 23. and many other to the same purpose. But without entring into this Controversie, I answer, When I tell you, that a Conscience void of Offence is such a one as doth not reproach us with any wilful viola-tions

tions of our Duty, I neither exclude Sin in the past life, nor defects in the present : But first, I exclude a deliberate continuance in any known sin : And in the next place, I make a difference, as the Scriptures and the Fathers have taught me, between *Defects* and *Crimes*, between *Infirmity* and *Wickedness*; for such is the frailty of Humane Nature, that it unavoidably subjects us to the one, and such the Power and Excellency of our Religion, that it raises us above the other.

| It is now high time to proceed from this general to a more particular and distinct Survey of this Duty in my Text : This by *St. Paul* is divided into two branches, our Duty towards God, and our Duty towards Man ; and each of these may again be sub-divided into two, for our Duty towards God may regard either his Publick or Private Worship ; and our Duty towards Man may regard either his Publick or Private Rights.

First, Of our Obligation to the *Publick Worship or Service of God*. I need not tell you surely how much the Honour of Religion, and the safety of the Nation depends upon the due performance of this. *The Honour of our Religion* ; 'tis not the Service of the Closet, but of

the Temple which falls under Publick Notice and Observation; and therefore 'tis the Unity and Order, the Comeliness and Devoutness of this that creates a Veneration for Religion, and raises the Reputation of a Church; And how far the safety of the Nation is interess'd in this, not only Scripture and Reason too, but our own Experience can inform us. Scripture and Reason tells us, *That a House divided against it self cannot stand*, Mat. 12. 25. And Experience, sad, sad Experience teaches us, that we no sooner divide in our Opinions and Worship, but we divide in our Affections too; and such is the Folly of some, and the Cunning and Malice of others, that 'tis impossible, or next to impossible, but that these Cantons and Divisions should be presently formed into Combinations and Factions, which first sharpen their Tongues and Pens, and then their Swords against one another.

But to mention other Obligations to the Publick Worship of God, this is the best and most effectual means of promoting the *Glory of God*, and the *Happiness and Edification of Man*, Publick and Solemn Adorations are the most Illustrious Testimonies we can render God of our Homage and Dependance: United Prayers do
most

most powerfully prevail, either to engage the Favour, or appease the Displeasure of God: And Publick Instruction, which ought always to be a part of the Publick Service of God, is so necessary, that I doubt the World would grow Atheistical and Barbarous without it; since 'tis to be feared that not only the far greater part of the Common People, but some also of better Quality, owe all the Divinity they have to Holy-days and Sundays.

Now this being so, the Glory of God, and Good of Man, the Honour of Religion, and the Safety of our Nation depending so much upon the Publick Worship of God, it is easie for us to infer what Obligation every Man lies under to advance and support the Solemnity and Credit of it, and what guilt they contract, who either causelessly absent, or, which is worse, divide from it: And how much more they who either by a careless, rude, and contemptuous carriage at Church, or by their open and notorious Immoralities at other times, are a scandal to it: Or they, lastly, who by studied and malicious Calumnies and Aspersions beget in Men a dis-esteem and contempt of it.

But though it be the Duty of every Christian not only to Worship God publickly, but also as

much as in him lies to advance Unity and Order in the Publick Worship, and, to support and raise the Esteem of it; yet surely none can be more obliged to this than the Magistracy, Nobility, and Gentry of a Nation; Mens Gratitude to God ought to be proportioned to their Obligations, and those whom God has distinguished from the rest of Mankind by his particular Favours, ought to distinguish themselves by a more particular and eminent Zeal for his Service: But if Gratitude cannot, methinks Interest should prevail with Persons of Rank and Dignity in a Nation to espouse the Cause of Religion; I mean, to support and advance the Established Worship of God; for these are they who must unavoidably suffer most in all the Confusions which Irreligion and Schism usher in. These have Estates, Honours, Preferments, Power, things fit to be the Quarry of the Needy, Covetous, and Ambitious, or the Scorn and Sport of the Insolent and Discontented; and this does generally fall out as often as either Luxury and Riot effeminate and dispirit a Nation, or open Prophaneness and Irreligion extinguishes in the Multitude all Reverence for Magistracy or Laws, or the Contempt of an Established Church, and the increase and licentiousness

tioufness of Sects breed Anarchy in the State ; or finally, the displeasure of God pours down Reproach upon the Heads of those that have dishonoured him, according to his constant Rule, *Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed,* 1 Sam. 2. 30.

To sum up all on this Head, and prevent any misapplication, considering how far the Glory of God, and the Good of Man is interested in God's Publick Worship amongst us, I would have the Breasts of all Men, and especially of those of Power and Rank, inflamed with the love of it, and a Zeal for the Honour and Defence of it. And if it be demanded, which way I would have them express this ; I answer plainly, by the open Practice of Devotion and Vertue themselves, and by countenancing and encouraging it in others, by a rational and calm Defence of the Worship and Doctrine of the Church against vain Cavils and Novelties, by a vigilant and couragious, but Christian Opposition, and countermining of all the secret Practices or open Hostilities of such Men as endeavour to defame, weaken, and subvert the Religion established, not out of Conscience towards God, but indeed Atheism, Restlessness, Ambition, Revenge, or some other ungodly Lust.

Finally,

Finally, by a hearty Concurrence with the Government for the suppressing all open Immorality, and advancing the Practice of Godliness and Religion amongst us, that there may be no room amongst us for the Complaint of the *Psalmist*, *Who will rise up with me against the wicked, or who will take my part against the wicked doer*, Psal. 94. 16. This puts me in mind of another branch of our Duty towards God; namely, his Private Worship or Service.

By the *Private Worship or Service of God*, is to be understood not only private Prayers, but all Acts either of Obedience to the Commands, or Submission and Resignation to the Providence of God. From amongst all these I will recommend to you two things as most necessary and pertinent at present.

1. *Sobriety* or Watchfulness over your selves at this and all other times of your Meeting.

It is a matter of very melancholy Reflection, that in that thing we call Society and Conversation, the Gentleman and the Christian, Mirth and Religion should be thought so inconsistent and incompatible; what, must Men, to flee Preciseness, needs run into Debauchery? and cannot Sourness or Dulness be banished Conversation, but Modesty and Sobriety must be

be so too? Time was when the Meetings and Entertainments of Christians (might I not to our shame add of well-bred Pagan's) was Philosophical, Edifying, and Instructive; but now they seem to minister only to Sin and Folly, to spread and propagate Looseness and Vanity. Ah, how wretched their Nature, and more wretched their Education; how mean the Parts, and how much meaner the Acquaintance of those Men, who have neither Wit enough to render Conversation Entertaining, nor Learning or Experience enough to render it Useful, nor Virtue or Business enough to render it Innocent. If this be so, as sure it is; if Intemperance be the Refuge of Idleness, Duncery, and ill Breeding, methinks Men of Parts, Education, or Business, should shun it as an Imputation and a Scandal: A Consideration which sometimes prevails when the great motives of Religion fail.

But in the next place, as Religion must not be drowned nor washed away by Intemperance, so neither must it be choaked and starved by Worldly Cares and Covetousness. It is a melancholy Remark, but such a one that scarce escapes any body, That there are too many who seem to affect something that comes very near up to a Contempt of Religion; as if it were a Scandal

Scandal to Men of Business to own any leisure for Religion in publick or private ; what is Prophaneness and Atheism if this be not ? What is this but to own either that your Business is such, that it were Impudence to beg or expect a Blessing on it ; or that you do not think the Providence and Patronage of God necessary to your Success ; or finally, that you do not believe another World, and therefore are only intent to provide for this. Ah, what degrees of Madnes and Folly is not Man capable of ! Ah, by how many, and how directly contrary ways are ensnared, and so perish ! What need have we to watch over our selves when Business is as apt to intoxicate and infatuate us as Pleasure , and Drudgery to prove as fatal as our Luxury ! I have put you in mind sufficiently of such parts of our Duty towards God as I thought most proper for our present Consideration, and am now generally led on to the second thing ; that is, our Duty towards Man. For Religion towards God is the best Foundation of Justice towards Man. Now Humane Rights being, as I told you, of two sorts, publick and private, and it being necessary to a Conscience void of Offence towards Man, to be tender of rendring both. I'll begin with the first.

By

By *Publick Rights* I mean the Rights of Prince and People ; for that the People have Rights too as well as the Prince, is evident from Scripture, which by giving us this Definition of the Supreme Magistrate, That *he is the Minister of God to us for good*, Rom. 13. 4. does plainly teach us, that the good of the People, that is, the Maintenance and Protection of them in their just Rights and Liberties, is the very End and Reason of Civil Government ; and if this be so, he perverts the Scripture who pretends Warrant from it to advance the Absoluteness of the Monarch upon the Servitude of the People, and to Sacrifice the Rights of the one to the Humour or Fancy of the other.

It is true, a *People* or Nation by their own Crimes or an unjust Force may be reduced to the unhappy Necessity of Redeeming their Lives by the loss of their Fortunes and Liberties, and in such a case they must stand to those Pacts and Covenants they thus enter into. But whatever be the Condition of any other Nation, blessed be God this is not ours ; our Constitution and Laws have so many marks in them of a due Temperament of Power in the Prince, and Liberty in the People, as do sufficiently demonstrate that we are born *Subjects*, not *Slaves*.

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And

And 'tis a vain Attempt here to pretend to evince a *Voluntary Slavery* from our *Oaths* and *Laws*; for who can be so superstitiously stupid, as not to discern that *Laws* are not to be the Chains and Fetters, but the Guards and Fences of the People's Just Rights and Liberties; and that our *Oaths* must never be interpreted to weaken and subvert, but strengthen and preserve the National Constitution.

I do not forget the Rights of the Prince, which must not be invaded neither, nor infringed by any Pretensions of the People: But I shall say nothing of them now, not only to decline the Censures of Flattery, Temporizing, and Ambition, or whatever else Men would please to pass on me, for Discourses on this Argument never escape without running the Gauntlet through all sides and parties, but also because this has been abundantly done of late, to the silencing of all Objections raised against our Allegiance to their present Majesties.

But when all these kind of Objections are answered, which in the mouths of most Men, whatever they are (in some few) are but shams and pretences, there is another which penetrates deeper, and spreads much further; that is, *The Impoverishment of the Nation by Taxes*, even such

as acknowledge this Revolution a Deliverance, and own it for a Blessing, do yet seem to regret the Price of it, and begin to fear lest they should pay too dear for it.

Now the Being of our Church and Nation, the Liberty and Peace of *Europe*, and the Preservation of the Protestant Religion depending so much upon the Success of Their Majesties Undertakings, and this again upon the Chearfulness and good Affection of their *English* Subjects, I shall not be thought, I hope, to pass my bounds, especially having a Text for it too, *Tribute to whom Tribute is due*, if I take upon me in a word or two to examine the Justice of a Complaint, which tends so much to alienate mens minds from Their Majesties Persons and Government, or very much to abate their Zeal for both. *The Taxes are heavy*; suppose it: But would a Foreign Yoak, Popery, and Persecution be lighter? Would the Oppression and Rapine of Arbitrary Lust be more easie than Parliamentary and Legal-Impositions? Or would it be more Honourable or Tolerable to us to Sacrifice our Blood and Treasure to a lawless Fancy and Ambition, or in the Defence of our Laws and Liberty, Religion and Property? *The Nation is Impoverished*. Be it so: But yet our Harvests

are not reaped with the Swords of our Enemies; our Granaries, Barns, and Houses are not every where on a light fire; the Country is not laid desolate, nor our Cities in Rubbage and Ashes; our Wives and Daughters are not Ravished before our Eyes, our Children murdered, our Faith tortured, nor our own Blood spilt promiscuously in the Fields and Lanes, High-ways and Streets: This is the Fortune of others, this is the state from which we Redeem our selves by the payment of Taxes. But methinks I need not yet carry the matter so high, lower Considerations may yet serve to satisfie reasonable men: 'Tis very ungrateful in us towards God, to forget so soon those Times wherein we were willing to part with the one half of all that we had, for the Insurance of the other: And 'tis not overgrateful to our Prince, that while in this Cause, our own Cause, he is Prodigal of his Blood, we should be niggardly and parsimonious of our Money, and murmur at the Charge of our own Safety.

But further yet, blessed be God, while we complain of our *Taxes* we complain of our *Plenty* too, such is the affluence and abundance of all things; there is no want of Bread or Cloth, I wish I could not say, our Pride and Vanity,
our

our Intemperance and Riot proclaim us to have no great want of *Money* neither : But however this be, there is a ready Remedy, Frugality and Modesty would soon pay our Taxes; and if we should quit our Luxury to purchase our Security, if we should sacrifice our Pride and Vanity to the Defence of our Liberty and Religion, methinks this were no great damage to us.

I hope there cannot any be found so fantastically fond of Change, so transported by Discontent, or destitute of Sense and the love of their Native Country, as to expect better Times under a *French* Conquest : What, is not Arbitrary Government the same thing it ever was ? Is Popery grown less Bloody, or less Superstitious ? Or is Bigottry grown mild and gracious by being irritated and exasperated ? What is it Men can expect from such a Revolution ? Will that Prince that makes other Countries a Wilderness, make ours a Paradise ? Will he that harasses and oppresses his own Subjects, and will not endure to be controuled either by Law or Religion, be scrupulous and tender of our *English* Laws, Rights, and Liberties ? Will he who has hitherto placed Glory in Subtilty and Cruelty, Blood and Falshood, change his Notion in the moment he overcomes us, and pursue it in
Acts

Acts of Mildness and Goodness, of Honour and Justice? These sure are Miracles fit for no Faith but that which swallows Transubstantiation. But alas, if we could suppose even all this, our Fortunes and Treasure are the least Demands the Necessity and Ambition of that Prince can stoop to; and he will never want Pretences to make such Demands appear Just and Reasonable: But if all this were not so, our Religion, our innate love of Liberty, and aversion to a Tyrannical Yoak, much more a Foreign one, and much more yet a *French* one, render us incapable of being either trusted or indulged by him; he will never think his own Power and Interest secure while there remains any thing either of our *English* Courage unbroke, our Fortunes unexhausted, or our Religion uncorrupted, and will look upon himself obliged to reduce us to the lowest degree of Impotence and Tameness; that is, to the condition of poor Cow'd Slaves, or despicable Apostates or Renegadoes. Had not the weight and importance of the matter detained me, I should not have insisted so long on this first Branch of our Duty towards Man, but I now hasten to the other, that is,

Our regard for private Rights: Various are the Rights of Men, and innumerable the ways by

by which they may be infringed and violated: But I'll insist only upon one, *i. e.* when Law is made the Instrument of wrong; and this happens several ways:

First, When one Man persecutes another with vexatious Suits; 'tis true, they run into a mad extream, who extend Christian Patience so far as to pronounce all Suits or Appeals to the Civil Magistrate unchristian; but 'tis as true too, that to approve and countenance all Suits, is to run into another; if every trifling Cause may warrant our demand of Reparation, and this Demand be pursued with all the Spight, and Heat, and Calumnies imaginable: If Spight and Malace commence Justice, when prosecuted under a form of Law, I see not what Obligation Christian Patience does pass upon us, unless it be to suffer what we cannot Revenge. Can this be agreeable to the *not resisting evil*, Matth. 5. 39. to the *overcoming evil with good*, Rom. 12. 21. Is this becoming the professed Mortification of a Christian, and the Patience of the Saints?

A *Second* way is, When Justice is delayed, baffled, or perverted through Bribery, Perjury, Faction, respect of Persons, and various Arts. I need not tell you how damnable a Crime any thing of this Nature is; it has been thought
against

against the very Law of Nations to Poyson a Fountain, of which even an Enemy was to drink: What must it be then to corrupt the Laws, which are the very Fountains and Springs of Political Life? To corrupt the Laws, and make them the Instruments of Oppression and Wrong, which should be our great Security and Relief, is a Sacrilege next that of Heresie, which prophanes and perverts the Word of God, and turns the Food of Life into Poyson. In a word, nothing is more glorious, and more wholesome to a Nation, than the due Administration of Justice, nothing more fatal than the perversion of it: Justice is the great Ligament of Humane Society, the Security of the Rich, and Protection of the Poor; the Encouragement of Vertue, Industry, and Trade, the Terror of Wickedness, Contention, and Ambition; and in one word, the Sinews of Government, the Beauty of Peace, and the Support of the Prince's Throne; being that which Charms the Discontents, and eases the Burdens, to which the happiest People are sometimes or other subject. May God ever bless this Nation with able and upright Ministers of Justice, Men whose Hearts are set upon the Work of God, the rooting out Wickedness, the countenancing and encouraging

raging Goodness, Righteousness, and Truth : Men of inflexible Integrity, not to be warped from the strict Rule of the Law by the Frowns or Favour of Princes at any time, the Noise and Clamour of the People,, or the Importunities and Violence of Parties and Factions, or any Inordinate Lust, Men finally Watchful and Zealous to repress the Injustice of others within the Sphere of their Authority. That the Righteous may rejoyce, the Insolence of Wicked Men being curbed ; according to that of Solomon, Prov. 29. 2. *When the righteous are in authority the people rejoyce, but when the wicked beareth rule the people mourn.* I have now gone through those several Particulars of the Duty in the Text which I judged most pertinent to be insisted on, and must be forced, I cannot say conclude, but break off with a few words upon the two remaining Heads.

Secondly. The next thing that follows in the Text, is the Diligence and Industry necessary to the preserving a Conscience void of Offence ; *Herein do I exercise my self :* To become a Saint here, and an Angel hereafter, is not the Work of a few assistant Wilhes, a crude and unconco-

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And Faith, or a *Laodicean* luke-warm Indifference: No, no, we have Hardships to undergo, Difficulties to surmount, Enemies to conquer; and 'tis not a lazy Religion, 'tis not a lifeless and half-formed Resolution that will be able to effect this; all the vigour of our Minds is to be bent this way, this ought to take up our thoughts, and employ our time, this ought to be the great care, the great study, and the great business of Life; *herein do I exercise my self*: And since I do not know of any thing that does more violently oppose the discharge of our Duty towards God and Man than Contention and Luxury, 'tis against these especially I must beseech and charge you to watch, and strive, and fortifie your selves; these are the Parents of Atheism and Irreligion in some, of Spiritual Pride, Hypocrisie, and Luke-warmness in others; and in a word, of all those Crimes which either disturbs Church or State, or plunge wretched Sinners in Misery and Perdition. Now to extinguish Contention, nothing will contribute more effectually than frequent and serious Reflections on the Guilt and Mischiefs of it, a thorough perswasion of the emptiness and uncertainty of all the things of this World, Honour, Power, Preferments, Riches; for

for let our Pretences be what they will, 'tis the thirst and ambition of Worldly things that kindles both our publick and private Contentions, *James 4. 1. Whence come wars and fightings among you, come they not from hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?* And lastly, a true Notion of Religion, that it consists not in Disputes and Controversies in Opinions, and Speculations in Forms or Fancies, but in Devotion, Faith, Justice, Charity, Humility, Purity, *in the keeping a Conscience void of offence towards God, and towards Man.* A true sense, I say, and frequent reflection on these things, the guilt and mischief of Contention, the vanity of Worldly things, and the nature and design of Christianity would soon put an end to our Divisions; 'twould make us meek and teachable, humble and mortified, and intent upon the great design and business of Life, the glory of God, and the good of Man; and this would banish the very names of Schism and Faction, revive the Zeal and recover the Unity of Primitive Christianity.

Next to Contention, Luxury is the most irreconcilable Enemy to Religion or the discharge of a good Conscience; this defeats all our great

Principles, supplants all wise Resolutions, and by degrees extinguishes in us the very desires of Righteousness and Glory. The proper Remedies of this are Spiritual Pleasure and the belief of a Judgment to come: The former will make us disdain Sensuality and Softness, and the latter dread it; the one will increase our Zeal and Fervor, the other our Caution; and both together will render us stedfast and unmoveable, and always abounding in the works of God. To contribute to this all I can, now I will,

Thirdly, Close this whole Discourse with the Motive or Ground of St. Paul's Diligence and Industry, a Judgment to come. I have no time to assert the truth of a Judgment to come, to vindicate the Sharpness and Eternity of the Sufferings of the Damned, against all the Cavils of Sinners, or to draw to the Life a Landskip of Canaan, and open to you a Scene of Heaven; I must only put you in mind, That this is the day of the Revelation of the Righteous Judgment of God, wherein God without any respect of Persons, shall render to every man according to his works, glory, honour, and peace upon every one that doth good, but indignation and

and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil, Rom. 2. This will be the last Audit, wherein all Accounts will be rightly stated, the last Tribunal, where all Causes will be impartially tried; here the Sophistry of Sinners will be fully answered, here all Controversies will be infallibly decided, here all the hidden works of Darknes will be brought to light, here the secret Springs and true Principles of Humane Actions will be unmasked, from all specious Pretences, decyphered, exposed, damned; here Schism will be distinguished from a well-grounded Separation, Rebellion from necessary Defence, Bigottry and Pharisaism from Christian Zeal. Here in one word, no Error will find shelter or protection, unless it be in the invinsible Ignorance and Sincerity of its Author. Ah, what a Folly will the Cunning of worldly Men then appear! what Sottishness and Stupidity the Wit of the profane! what Poverty the Wealth of him *who lays up Treasure for himself, but is not rich towards God!* what Cruelty the Luxury of the Voluptuary, and what damnable Wickedness the boundless Ambition of Princes, the Corruption of Persons in great Trust, and the Restlessness, Turbulency, and Revenge of Men of all Ranks and Fortunes. Why then

then do Men flatter themselves that their sins pass here concealed or unpunished, when but a moment and the last Judgment will overtake them? Why do they pride themselves in the Treasures of Wickedness, and applaud themselves in the pleasures of Sin, when but a few moments and the Day of Judgment will turn all these into Gall and Wormwood, Horror and Pain? Ah, how little reason has Man to please himself in the success of Wickedness, when but a few Minutes and the Day of Judgment will convince him of his fatal Mistake, and shew him that there is no Misfortune, no Misery so dreadful as success in Sin! Ah, how ought these thoughts, if we be indeed Christians, if the Word be mingled with Faith, affect and pierce our hearts! how ought it to startle and awaken us! how ought it to fill our Souls with horror and detestation for all Sin! *When Paul reasoned of Righteousness, Temperance, and Judgment to come, Felix trembled, Acts 24. 25.* This, in a word, is an Article of our Faith, which, if we would ponder it often and seriously, would enlighten our Minds, purifie our Hearts, establish and strengthen us in the Obedience of the Gospel, vanquish all the Difficulties and Discouragements of Vertue, and enable

us with *St. Paul*, to keep a Conscience void of offence towards God, and towards Man. God of his Mercy grant us Grace so to meditate a Judgment to come, that it may have this Influence and Operation upon us, that so from the Tryals and Temptations of this World we may pass into the Rest and Glory of Eternity.

F I N I S.

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